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The Honorable Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture, USDA,
1400 Independence Ave, SW,
Washington, DC 20250.

November 3, 2005

RE – Farm Bill Comments –Achieving Forestry Conservation & Environmental Goals

Mr. Secretary:

The Washington Farm Forestry Association is the only group dedicated solely to the interests of family forestland owners in Washington. We are struggling to keep our lands forested while increasing regulations demand we provide even more public benefits for the environment. Forestland is the largest contributor to clean air, water, fish and wildlife habitat yet we remain under appreciated and generally overlooked.

Our needs are modest because our type of farming is inherently good for the environment. Regulation, rather than incentives available to other farmers, erroneously assume we will stay on the landscape without appropriate help to sustain &/or provide more public benefits. Achieving more conservation and environmental public benefits on private forestland would be enhanced by:

- "Forestry" programs that are commensurate with their public contributions / potential loss to public if we convert – FLEP is under funded and those of us in the West have needs/opportunities much higher than the portion available to us.
- EQIP technically includes farm forestry but w/o appropriate set asides forestry is excluded because we can never compete with poop.
- CREP, CSP, FPP, WRP, & WHIP are popular with ag folks but discourage or specifically prohibit forestland unless it's incidental to ag land – not only aren't we eligible for incentives, we are subjected to involuntary set asides
- Fragmentation of forestland continues to increase the need for Stewardship and Extension Foresters to educate & motivate the "newbies" at the same time state and federal support for these "white hat" government folks is going away.

Family forestland owners are already highly motivated to be great stewards and are proud of the public benefits we provide but we need more parity and access to programs intended to enhance and maintain public environmental goals.

Please also find attached "Family Forests in Washington – A Vision for the Future" which will show more local as well as national issues we face.

Ken Miller
President, Washington Farm Forestry Association

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